

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 PC-01 /073 W
-----161745Z 063832 /43

R 161630Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 582
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 2058

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, PGOV, BR
SUBJ: OPPOSITION LEADERS SEEK CLOSER CONTACTS WITH USG;
EXPRESS MDB SYMPATHY ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

REF: A) BRASILIA 1740 B) BRASILIA 1878

1. SUMMARY. MISSION POLITICAL OFFICERS IN BOTH SAO PAULO AND BRASILIA HAVE BEEN SOUGHT OUT BY MDB DEPUTIES OVER PAST WEEK WHO DESIRED CLOSER CONTACT WITH THE USG. DEPUTIES HAVE STRESSED THAT USG HAS FRIENDS IN BRAZIL IN THE OPPOSITION WHO SUPPORT HUMAN RIGHTS EMPHASIS BY PRESIDENT CARTER. IN EACH CASE DEPUTIES HAVE STRESSED THAT THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE CLOSELY WATCHED AND IN SOME DANGER OF THEY APPEAR TO BE TOO CLOSE TO THE AMERICANS. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO CONGEN SAO PAULO, ALENCAR FURTADO, NEW MDB LEADER IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, SOUGHT OUT CONGEN OFFICER MARCH 7 FOR MEETING IN DOWNTOWN HOTEL. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DEPUTIES JARBAS VASCONCELOS AND FREITAS NOBRE.

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3. FURTADO PREFACED THE CONVERSATION BY STATING THAT THE MDB EXPECTED "DRAMATIC EVENTS" THIS YEAR. THE NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE CHAMBER WAS FACED WITH IMPORTANT BATTLES WITHIN THE MDB AND WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE CONTACT BETWEEN THE NEW MDB CHAMBER LEADERSHIP AND THE USG BE STRENGTHENED.

4. FURTADO SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN OBLIGED TO SUPPORT GEISEL ON

THE REJECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT (REFTEL B) BECAUSE THE PRESIDENT MADE IT A MATTER OF SOVEREIGNTY. BUT MDB WANTED TO REDUCE SUCH SUPPORT TO A BARE MINIMUM. FURTADO EXPRESSED IRONIC SATISFACTION THAT MDB SECRETARY GENERAL, DEPUTY THALES RAMALHO, OFFERED TO GO TO GEISEL TO EXPRESS HIS PARTY'S SUPPORT FOR GEISEL'S ACTION. (A MOVE THAT FURTADO SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSED AS UNNECESSARY.) "HE HAS REVEALED HIMSELF AS THE GOVERNMENT SUPPORTER "ADESISTA" THAT HE IS AND DISCREDITED HIMSELF COMPLETELY IN THE PARTY." FURTADO SAID THAT HIS POSITION ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT WAS THE SAME AS THAT TAKEN IN JORNAL DO BRASIL AND JORNAL DA TARDE: THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REJECT ANY INTERFERENCE INTO BRAZILIAN SOVEREIGNTY, BUT SHOULD ALSO DO ITS UTMOST TO CORRECT ANY ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FURTADO ASKED TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE REPORT AS SOON AS IT WAS PUBLISHED (IF NOT BEFORE) SO THAT THE MDB COULD PRESS THE GOVERNMENT ON CORRECTIVE MEASURES.

5. FURTADO SAID THAT THE INCIDENT OF THE REPORT ILLUSTRATED THAT THE MDB WILL NEED MUCH BETTER CONTACT WITH THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT SO THAT IT COULD BE PRECISELY AND FULLY INFORMED ABOUT EVENTS. FURTADO SAID HE HAD A MUTUAL EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION IN MIND "BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY ISSUES, SUCH AS HUMAN RIGHTS, WHERE OUR POINTS OF VIEW ARE THE SAME." IT WAS AGREED THAT THIS SORT OF CONTACT WAS BEST CARRIED OUT WITH THE EMBASSY IN BRASILIA. FURTADO CAUTIONED THAT HE WAS WATCHED CLOSELY. IT WOULD NOT BE WISE FOR HIM TO BE SEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH USG OFFICIALS. HE SAID THAT IF REGULAR CONTACT COULD BE ARRANGED, IT WOULD BEST BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN FREITAS NOBRE "MY FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND RIGHT HAND MAN" AND SOMEONE AT THE FIRST

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SECRETARY LEVEL IN THE EMBASSY. VASCONCELOS WAS ALSO AN ALTERNATIVE. VASCONCELOS AND FURTADO THEN MENTIONED NAMES OF SPECIFIC EMBASSY OFFICERS THEY HAD MET.

6. FURTADO SAID THAT GIVEN THE EXCITEMENT OF THE MILITARY, INFLATION, THE GOVERNMENT'S SALARY POLICIES, AND LACK OF STRONG POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT, "THE MDB HAD TO BE PREPARED FOR FAST MOVING EVENTS" DURING THE YEAR. FURTADO REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT ON "MILITARY EXCITEMENT" EXCEPT TO SAY THAT DEMOCRATIC CURRENTS, AS WELL AS HARDLINERS, WERE DISCONTENTED WITH GEISEL. (COMMENT: HIS REFERENCES TO THE POSSIBILITY OF RAPIDLY OCCURRING "DRAMATIC EVENTS" WAS A CONSTANT THEME OF HIS CONVERSATION).

7. IN THE PARTY, FURTADO, WHO WAS ELECTED CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES MAJORITY LEADER TWO WEEKS AGO OVER MODERATE INCUMBENT LAERTE VIEIRA, LOOKS FORWARD TO A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN TO CLEAN OUT GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS FROM NATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND SET A NEW POLITICAL LINE FOR THE MDB. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED

TIONED MDB SECRETARY-GENERAL THALES RAMALHO, BUT REFUSED TO GIVE AN OPINION ON MDB PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES. FURTADO BOASTED THAT "WHEN WE BEGIN TO SPEAK, THE PARTY WILL FALL BEHIND US BECAUSE THE MILLIONS IN THE MDB ELECTORATE WILL SUPPORT US." (COMMENT: FREITAS NOBRE TOLD CONGEN OFF ON JANUARY 20 THAT THE AIM OF THE GROUP BEHIND FURTADO WAS TO REPLACE THE WHOLE MDB NATIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH PEOPLE WHO WOULD TAKE A STRONGER OPPOSITION STAND TO THE GOVERNMENT. THEIR CURRENT CANDIDATES WERE RIO GRANDE DO SUL SENATOR PAULO BROSSARD FOR PRESIDENT AND SAO PAULO SENATOR FRANCO MONTORO FOR SECRETARY GENERAL. MONTORO TOLD CONGEN OFF HE KNEW "NOTHING ABOUT IT", BUT GUIMARAES TOLD CONSUL GENERAL "THEY WANT TO GET AT ME." ELECTIONS FOR THE PARTY POSITIONS COME UP IN SEPTEMBER.)

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USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 PC-01 /073 W
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 2058

8. SIMILARLY, EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER WAS APPROACHED IN BRASILIA BY MDB SAO PAULO DEPUTY AIRTON SOARES, WHO ALTHOUGH A BACK-BENCHER, HAS A REPUTATION AS A HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST. SOARES SAID HE WAS AUTHORIZED TO SPEAK FOR A GROUP OF MDB DEPUTIES AND SENATORS, WHICH INCLUDED SUCH OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME AS FURTADO AND SENATOR MARCOS FREIRE. THE GROUP WANTED THE US TO KNOW THAT IT HAD FRIENDS IN THE BRAZILIAN CONGRESS WHO APPRECIATED WHAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WAS DOING FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. FURTHERMORE, THE GROUP WANTED TO KEEP CONTACT WITH THE AMERICANS "IN CASE SOMETHING HAPPENS." SOARES CAUTIONED THAT ACTIVITIES OF HIS GROUP WERE CLOSELY MONITORED, AND TO APPEAR TO BE TOO CLOSE TO THE AMERICANS AT THIS TIME WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS "TREASON" BY THE GOVERNMENT. SOARES

ALSO INDICATED THAT THE MDB WAS FEELING STRONG PRESSURE FROM ITS CONSTITUENCY, PARTICULARLY THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, TO SPEAK OUT IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORT.

9. EMBOFF PROMOSSED SOARES TO KEEP IN CONTACT IN THE COURSE OF HIS USUAL ROUNDS OF BOTH ARENA AND MDB MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, STRESSING THAT IT IS NORMAL DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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EMBASSIES TO SEEK OUT THE OPINIONS OF BOTH THE OPPOSITION AND PARTY IN POWER.

10. COMMENT. FURTADO, WHO VISITED THE US LAST YEAR ON A LEADER GRANT, IS FROM THE MDB'S LEFT-WING, THE "AUTENTICOS", AND WON A NARROW ELECTION AS MINORITY LEADER OVER THE MODERATE CANDIDATE ON A PLATFORM OF A MORE AGGRESSIVE OPPOSITION ROLE FOR MDB IN CONGRESS. FURTADO, HOWEVER OWES HIS ELECTION TO THE SWING TO HIM OF A NUMBER OF MODERATE VOTES AND, ACCORDINGLY, HAS GONE OUT OF HIS WAY IN INITIAL STATEMENTS TO DENY THAT HE IS SECTARIAN OR THAT HE PLANS A CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH. FURTADO HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN STRONGLY NATIONALIST, AN ADVOCATE OF MUCH TIGHTER CONTROLS OVER MULTINATIONALS AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT, AND A STRONG PRO-POONENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND OF PROMPT RETURN TO THE RULE OF LAW. HE HAS ALREADY GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT STRONG SUPPORTIVE STATEMENTS AGAINST US INTERFERENCE ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE, BUT HAS BEEN FAR MORE CAUTIOUS IN OFFERING UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT ON THE ISSUE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT. HE AND OTHER MDB HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES, SUCH AS SENATOR BROSSARD, ARE CLEARLY FEELING THE DILEMMA OF RECONCILING IN THEIR PUBLIC POSITIONS STRONG SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND SYMPATHY WITH US INTENTIONS ON ONE HAND WITH THE INVOCATION OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY ON THE OTHER. WE EXPECT MOST OF THE MDB, UNDER STRONG PRESSURE TO CONFORM, WILL CONTINUE TO COME DOWN ON THE SIDE OF RESISTANCE TO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS WHILE DEMANDING GREATER PROGRESS INTERNALLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. WE SUSPECT FURTADO SEEKS TO KEEP THE LINES OPEN TO US TO SIGNAL SOME MDB SYMPATHY FOR OUR HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH AND, AS SITUATION IN CONGRESS POLARIZES, USE CONTACTS WITH US TO HELP BLUNT FURTHER CHARGES FROM MDB MODERATES AND FROM MUCH OF ARENA THAT HE IS AN ANTI-US, ANTI-CAPITALIST RADICAL.

11. WE WILL, OF COURSE, MAINTAIN OUR CONTACT OPENLY IF DISCREETLY WITH BOTH SIDES, MAKING CERTAIN THAT WE GIVE BALANCED ATTENTION TO MDB'S MODERATE AND RADICAL WINGS. THRUST OF COMMENTS IN BOTH SAO PAULO AND BRASILIA MAKE OBVIOUS CONFIDENTIAL

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FACT THAT FURTADO "AUTENTICOS" ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT
POSSIBILITY OF SUDDEN CHANGE IN BRAZILIAN POLITICAL SITUATION
AT PRESENT TIME OF UNCERTAINTY.
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Message Attributes

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